

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 21601

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, WB, GE, GW
SUBJECT: TRANSIT TRAFFIC AND THE LOEWE EXPULSION

REFS: (A) BONN 21566; (B) BERLIN 7337; (C) BONN 21539

1. ON THE BASIS OF DECEMBER 27 CONVERSATION WITH FRG
BONN GROUP REP (VON ARNIM), EMBASSY BELIEVES FRG HAS
DECIDED TO DOWNPLAY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GDR TRANSIT
OBSTRUCTION REPORTED IN REF A.

2. VON ARNIM SAID THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE REPORT ON
THE SITUATION HAD NOT BEEN SENT OVER TO THE CHANCELLOR'S
OFFICE UNTIL DECEMBER 24. IN THAT REPORT, THE FOREIGN
OFFICE ONLY RECOMMENDS TAKING THE MATTER UP IN THE
PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED JANUARY 20 MEETING OF THE FRG-GDR
TRANSIT COMMISSION. VON ARNIM ADDED THAT A REACTION
FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE IS NOT EXPECTED BEFORE
JANUARY 3.

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3. VON ARNIM DEFENDED THIS COURSE OF ACTION BY NOTING
THAT IT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE TRANSIT COMMISSION TO
LOOK INTO DIFFICULTIES IN THE OPERATION OF THE TRANSIT
AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, HE TACITLY ADMITTED THAT THE FRG
COURSE OF ACTION COULD BE INTERPRETED AS DOWNPLAYING

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AFFAIR.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS VOICED ITS CONCERN TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE OVER THE DECEMBER 23-24 EVENTS. NEVERTHELESS, WE CAN UNDERSTAND, IF NOT TOTALLY SYMPATHIZE WITH, THE FRG DECISION TO DEEMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EVENTS. AT DECEMBER 23 BONN GROUP MEETING, UK AND FRENCH REPS COMMENTED ONLY BRIEFLY BUT CAUTIOUSLY AFTER HENZE'S REPORT. UK REP (CARTER) OBSERVED THAT THE PRACTICAL OPERATION OF THE AGREEMENTS WAS LARGELY A FUNCTION OF WIDER FRG-GDR, EAST-WEST RELATIONS. FRENCH REP (DE BOISSIEU) DISPUTED THAT VIEW NOTING THAT SUCH A LINKAGE WAS UNACCEPTABLE. BOISSIEU ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE INCIDENT WAS NOT IMPORTANT IN ITSELF AND, IN ANY CASE, WAS A FAIT ACCOMPLI. GIVEN THE BRITISH AND FRENCH REACTION, REMINISCENT OF THE STERN-FAHRT AFFAIR, AND THE LIMITED OPERATIONAL CONDITION OF MOST FRG OFFICES DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON, THE FOREIGN OFFICE MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT IT HAD LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO DOWNPLAY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GDR ACTION.

5. IN EMBASSY VIEW, THE ALLIES SHOULD COMPLAIN TO THE SOVIETS OVER THIS SEEMINGLY ARBITRARY NATURE OF THE GDR INTERFERENCE WITH ACCESS, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS MINOR AND OF RELATIVELY SHORT DURATION. UNTIL THE CHANCELLERY HAS DECIDED ON HOW THE FRG INTENDS TO PLAY IT WITH THE GDR, HOWEVER, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE THE BRITISH AND FRENCH ON A COURSE OF ACTION FOR THE ALLIES. THE ISSUE WILL BE DISCUSSED FURTHER IN THE BONN GROUP THE WEEK OF JANUARY 3. END COMMENT.
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